

OUR NATIONAL SINS.

A SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

PORTSMOUTH, VA.

On the Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer,

JANUARY 4, 1861.

—0000—

BY REV ISAAC W K HANDY, D D

—0000—

PORTSMOUTH, VA.

Printed at the Office of the Daily and Weekly Transcript.

1861.

OUR NATIONAL SINS.

A SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

PORTSMOUTH, VA.

On the Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer,

JANUARY 4, 1861

—00000—

BY REV ISAAC W K HANDY, D D

—00000—

PORTSMOUTH, VA.

Printed at the Office of the Daily and Weekly Transcript.

1861

CORRESPONDENCE.

—o—

PORTSMOUTH, JAN. 21., 1861.

REV. I. W. K. HANDY, D. D.

Dear Sir:—The undersigned, members of your church and congregation, in this city, respectfully request the publication of your sermon, on the occasion of the National Fast, Jan. 4th, 1861.

Believing the sentiments in your discourse on that day, are such as will be approved by the thinking men of the nation, at this crisis, we earnestly hope you will accede to our wishes.

Affectionately yours,

Chas. Snead.	Isaiah Stokes,
Jessee H. Carr,	J. W. Lingo,
John Blackadder,	Merritt S. Moore,
Samuel W. Gilderslieve,	Henry Pendleton,
Alex'r C. Matthieson,	T. J. Savage,
Alex'r Morton,	William Wright,
John Nolen,	Samuel Newby,
Henry Nolen,	William H. Stokes,
Malcolm Whyte;	Joseph Kettler,
Robert Bunting,	N. B. Webster.

PORTSMOUTH, VA., JAN. 21st, 1861.

To Messrs. Chas. Snead, Jessee L. H. Carr, John Blackadder, Prof.
N. B. Webster and others,

Gentlemen I cheerfully accede to your wishes, in regard to the publication of my Fast-day discourse. If there is any probability of thus extending my usefulness, at this unusual crisis, I have no right to with-hold it.

I am very truly your friend and Pastor,

ISAAC W. K. HANDY.

S E R M O N .

JEREMIAH, XIII. 22. *And if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered and thy heels made bare.*

The circumstances which have brought us together, in the services of this day, are peculiar, and solemn. Never before, since the adoption of the Federal Constitution, has this our favoured country been so fearfully threatened, with those direful ills which must attend a general revolution. The crisis is appalling! The cords, which have so closely bound the several parts of this Union, are now, being stretched to their utmost tension; and one of them is, already, sundered. The very next telegram may bring us intelligence of a state of things, which must inevitably result in the entire severance of all those pleasant, and intimate associations, which have distinguished us, among the nations of the earth.

A prevailing ascerbity characterizes the feelings of thousands at the North, and at the South; hostile parties are becoming more and more incensed; the spirit of concession has failed; "Minute-men" and "Wide-Awakes" are urgently preparing for the most desperate contingencies; conventions are assembling; fierce declaimers are venting their spleen; the counsels of calm and dispassionate men are unheeded; and, there is an increasing thirst for excitement and change. In this state of affairs, the commercial, social, and even the ecclesiastical interests of the whole country are fearfully affected. Banks have suspended; princely merchants are failing in business; distrust, like some demon spectre, stands gazing, with suspicion, in every market place; and, men are beginning to be afraid even of their best friends. Fond relatives are full of anxiety, in respect to the distant objects of their regard; letters pass to and fro, inquiring for the signs of the times; and multitudes are aghast at the prospect. The Church is convulsed; new lines of division are beginning to appear; and her faithful ones are ashamed of the mischief perpetrated by injudicious, and fanatical preachers. Others—true servants of God, who have not, heretofore, uttered a word, from the sacred desk, on political subjects—are now constrained to speak boldly, in regard to the sins of

the Nation. In a word, a fearful throbbing is felt in the pulse of society, appalling alike to the statesman, the citizen, and the christian !!

My brethren, what meaneth all this? Why all this confusion, and heat, and suspicion, and fear? Is it true, that the glorious inheritance transmitted to us, by our fathers, and the sage founders of this republic, are to be forfeited? Can it be, that our sons are to arm for battle, and that the blood of our kindred is to be spilled on our own hearth-stones, and in those very halls, where we have been accustomed to recount, with noble pride, the chivalrous deeds of our common ancestry? Are all our bright visions of a model republic to be brought to an end? Are all our bays and rivers to be studded with ships of war? Are the numerous rail-roads, which thread the ramifications of every State, and county, of our once fond Union, to be converted into media of communication, for the perpetration of fratricidal bloodshed? Are all our commercial interests to be stopped? Are all our industrious mechanics to be converted into soldiers, and put upon half pay, to kill their brethren? Is all the gold, which, of late, has been pouring into the coffers of our great tradesmen, to be locked up in ponderous safes, and rolled away into neglected cellars: whilst our honest artisans, and yeomen are thrown out of employ, and their children are starving for a morsel of bread? Are we to plunge ourselves into all these distresses, and to experience manifold, and untold other sorrows,—and all this, for the want of a tithe of patience and moderation?

I know, my brethren, that there is a point, beyond which “forbearance ceases to be virtue:” but, that “charity” which “endureth all things—hopeth all things,” demands of us, that we should “bear with one another, and forgive one another,” even as Christ is ready to forgive us.

Say not, that these principles of christian ethics are in-applicable to states and peoples. The great Jehovah makes no demands of us, as individuals, which do not apply to the masses, in the aggregate. His dealings with the nations are even as of old; and it is as true to day, as ever, that “Blessed is that people whose God is the Lord;”—whilst on the other hand, it is equally true, that He “setteth his face against” the people that fear not Him; and, that He curseth the nations, which call not upon His name.

If, then, it be apparent, that the people of this once boasted Confederacy are now filled with confusion, and there be no prospect of dissipating the dark clouds, that over-shadow our political horizon—if the new developments of each succeeding day, premonish only a more terrific storm,

—what are we to understand, by all these murmurings of the tempest, but the dark and fearful frowns of an ireful God ?

There can be no question, my brethren, that as a NATION, we have sinned. Like Israel of old, we have gone after strange gods ; and, as the vengeance of Jehovah was executed upon that adulterous people, so, also, for our iniquities, the vials of his wrath are being let loose upon *us*. Thanks be to his name, that in the midst of these present evils, and in the prospect of still more woeful ills, He has put it into our hearts, to assemble thus, with FASTING, HUMILIATION and PRAYER. God be praised, that the Chief Magistrate of our smitten States, alive to the rueful aspect of the present crisis, has issued the pious proclamation, that now causes a nation to bow—Oh, that it may be the homage of a deep penitent abasement ; and, that as we cry, with mourning hearts, “What have we done ? Wherefore are we in affliction ?”—He would, in mercy, open our eyes, and teach us our folly ! Our Heavenly Father will be justified, when he speaks ; and will oblige all men to acknowledge his righteous dispensations—and, therefore, will He place our sins in order before us. Do we ask, then, wherefore come these things upon us ? The answer is at hand. “*For the greatness of thine iniquity, are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare*”—for thy *sins* art thou thus bare-footed, and naked ; for thy *sins* art thou exposed to this poverty, and disgrace !

That we may engage aright in the services of this hour, it is important, that we should have an intelligent impression in regard to our NATIONAL SINS ; that is, we should know, just what *are* the sins of the Nation—the sins of the people in their collective capacity, and in their relationship to government. And, here let me suggest, that in noticing this view, we are not to hide ourselves behind some fancied abstraction, and thus to loose all personal responsibility, in this act of penitence and abasement. If the Nation has sinned, *we* have sinned with it. As individuals, we have contributed our part, in producing the general corruption of morals ; and, in so far as we have had any feeling, in accordance with the common current, or given any countenance, directly or indirectly, to the prevailing iniquities, it becomes us to bewail our malfecundance, and to implore the Divine mercy and forgiveness.

What, then, are the sins of this Nation ? I cannot mention them all. Their name is LEGION ! At present, I can call your attention, only, to some of the most prominent : leaving you, my brethren, to the privacy of your own closets, and to your own honest heart-searchings, to discover and confess them, as you ought.

Among the most prominent of our NATIONAL SINS, I may mention the following, viz:—

I. *Political Atheism*.—An atheist, according to the general acceptation, is one who denies the existence of God. The term will bear still another signification—*refusal to acknowledge God*. It is in this sense, that the expression is now used. As a people, we have refused to acknowledge the Lord. We have been ashamed of him, in our legislative halls: we have denied Him, in our public enactments; we have defied Him, in our judicial proceedings; we have shunned to declare Him, in our gatherings at the hustings; and, in our numerous elections, we have, often even positively denounced Him.

To realize our position as a *Godless* people, it is only necessary to call to mind the *negative* character, so far as the Deity is concerned, of that document which we have been wont to extol, to the very Heavens, as the glorious charter of our liberties—the Constitution of the United States. The name of the Supreme Jehovah is not mentioned, so much as once, in the entire instrument. There is no intimation, directly or indirectly, as to the *derivative* wisdom of the Almighty in originating the governments of the earth: nor, of His *ordaining authority*, in constituting the “powers that be.” Strange, that this boasted platform of our rights, so generally considered inimitable, in the wisdom and completeness of its provisions, should after all, be found thus sadly defective. No wonder, that with such authority, in the organic basis of the government, He should be disowned, alike, in its constituent departments—that “Man should be everything, and God nothing” in all our political arrangements; in our diplomacy: in our general laws; in our official pronouncements; in everything, indeed, that bears a government seal, or comes to the people with the impress of authority.

True, there have been a number of interesting and delightful instances on the part of Governors, Legislators, and other public functionaries, where the Christian sentiment has evidently prevailed. WASHINGTON was not ashamed, on the eve of an engagement, to appeal to that Great Being, who holds the lives of all in his hands. FRANKLIN, in the midst of conflicting interests, and when darkness pervaded the minds even of the sagacious, who met to construct the national compact, boldly acknowledged a superintending Providence; and prevailed on his company to establish a rule for a daily appeal to the Father of Lights, to illumine their understandings. General HARRISON could confess Christ in a Presidential message: and our present honored Chief Magistrate

has issued the remarkable and truly devotional proclamation, which encourages the hopes of thousands, who have this day assembled, in the name of God. But, these instances are isolated. They serve to redeem us from the imputation of being a *nation of infidels*; but, they do not relieve us, in the judgment of an enlightened theodicy, from the appearance, to say the least, of infidelity in the *provisions*, and *machinery* of our idolized civil, and religious institutions.

There has been an over-weening fear, in this country, of uniting church and state. By this, I do not mean, that, under any circumstances, it is desirable to mingle the affairs of the church, with those of the government. If, on the contrary, there is any one boon transmitted to us by our Revolutionary sires, for which we should be more grateful, than all others, it is the perfect toleration allowed to religionists of every hue, and the entire withdrawal of the state from all interference with the consciences of men. In this country, we want no Establishment; we desire no aid from the Government, in supporting the church of Christ, or in keeping up the institutions of religion; but we *do* want the countenance of civil authority in favour of Christian principle—we *do* desire the recognition, in our highest assemblies, and by our most august authorities, of the Great King of Nations; and, there can be no well grounded hope of permanency, and continued prosperity, where God is forgotten. It is as true of nations, as of individuals, that “the Lord is with them that are with Him:” that those “who seek Him, He will be found of them;” and, that those “who forsake Him, He will also forsake.”

II. *Pride of Nationality* is another of the sins of our American people. We have ten thousand blessings, for which, as a people, to render grateful acknowledgments to Almighty God. Truly, “the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places—yea, we have a goodly heritage.” It is right to recount the mercies of Jehovah, and to remember how true it is, that He hath not dealt so, with any other nation. We may speak often to one another, of our national advantages; of our improved resources; and, of the manifold rights and privileges, vouchsafed to all our citizens, and to the very poorest in the land. Criminal indeed would we be, not to make these the subject of our most joyful celebrations, and the song of every happy fireside. It becomes us, to “give unto the Lord, the glory due unto his name;” and, should the offering of praise never ascend from our lips, because of all this that God hath wrought, then we should deserve his frowns; and well might *Isabod*—the glory hath departed—be

written upon whatever, now, interests us most, and the curses of the ancient kingdoms become our inheritance forever.

But, this is not the element that characterizes the spirit of our people. We *glory*, indeed; but not in the Lord. Our words are "great swelling words of vanity." We boast of our broad domain; our magnificent prairies; our splendid mountain scenery; the beauty and length of our rivers; our noble bays; our extensive sea coasts; and our safe and elegant harbours—but for all these, we give not God the thanks, and exult, and glory in them, as though our own hands had made them all.

We pride ourselves in the speciality, and perfection of our institutions; and, vauntingly declaim in regard to our noble Constitution, as the palladium of rational Liberty—consolidating, through all time, the union of these States—and designating this glorious land the *Alcazar* of freedom, and of citizen sovereignty. It may indeed be true, that no nation has such a Constitution—"a structure reared with unequalled wisdom, by the purest patriots, and the most successful benefactors of the human race." Admit it all; and sing with enthusiasm, if you please:

"Great were the hearts, and strong the minds,
Of those who reared in high acclaim,
The immortal eagle of liberty that binds
Our fair broad empire, State with State."

But who gave these sages their wisdom? who put it into their hearts, and inspired them with energy, to lay broad and deep, the foundations of those pillars of virtue and intelligence? Who has watched over and protected this charter of the rights we hold so dear, and brought it down to us unaltered and unscathed, through all the fires of political strife, as they have been successively kindled during a period of more than three score and ten years? For all this we are indebted to God, and not to ourselves. It is becoming, then, that enjoying these blessings, we should prize them; and, whilst we honor and revere the good men, who were made instrumental in securing to us these rights, never should we forget to magnify and adore the name of that Great Sovereign, who "hath the hearts of all men in his hands, and turneth them, as the rivers of water are turned."

We have *idolized* "our great country;" we have *bowed down* in delightful homage to the distinguished names that glitter as bright stars in the galaxy of our country's meridian; we have worshipped the Union as a God. We have rejoiced in our own sufficiency; and in the pride of our faces, we have refused to seek after, and to know the eternal Majesty of Heaven and of earth. The jealousy of the Most High is

aroused ;—He is angry with this idolatrous people. As he punished Nineveh, and Tyre and Babylon, for their neglect of Him—so also in the fulness of His own time, (unless there be seasonable repentance.) He will bring to utter desolation a people who so persistently follow after other Gods.

III. *Lust of Dominion* is another, as it seems to me, of the sins of this nation. There are political issues involved in this point, with which, as a minister of the Gospel, I have nothing to do. I wish, only to look at the subject, from a scriptural stand point; and, to expose the errors of the people, as they may be deduced from the word of God. From the mere fact of an extensive territory, there can, of course, be elicited no principle of morals. A kingdom or republic may be large or small; and God may smile upon the one, or the other with like complaisance. Some of the largest empires have been the most durable; and, to a very remarkable extent, have been free from internal feuds and disorders. The kingdom of Russia, and the Celestial Empire of China stand out before the world, in spite of all that we may regard as objectional, and contrary to the spirit of rational liberty, as noble structures of strength and durability; and, they may even claim to have had the protection of Heaven, in securing their proud stability.

It is not, then, a question of political economy, or of governmental policy, with which this lust of territory has had to do. Let the borders of our land extend from ocean to ocean; and stretch out over all this broad expanse, to the North, and to the South, if God would have it so: but, let us beware, lest we contend against the wisdom of his sure, and unerring providence. We should be cautious, lest, in our anxiety to become the greatest of all people, on God's earth, we make undue haste: and thus, construct a government so enfeebled by its distant and scattered centres, as utterly to lose its cohesion; and thus, fall to pieces of its own ponderous weight.

But, especially, does it become a people, so blessed of God, as we have been, to wait patiently, for the full and clear developments of his sovereign will: and, rightly appreciating what we already possess, to subdue the cravings of our avarice and pride. That lustful appetite, which has prompted so many of our people to give countenance to the schemes of fillibusters and free-booters, is morbid, and reprehensible in the extreme. It is really astonishing, how even good men have, sometimes, so far forgotten themselves, and the positions they sustain, as to manifest a sort of *sympathy* with the movements of these adventurous outlaws.

With such a feeling, so greatly prevalent in every part of our land—not only among the vicious, but, too frequently, among those who have a better name,—who can wonder, that our public officials, and even the Chief Executive himself, should, at times, find themselves under the influence of a popular pressure, which naught but the soundest statesmanship, and the best taught morality can possibly resist?

It becomes the people of this land, to moderate these cravings for territory. We have country enough now, to afford a comfortable home and fireside, to every man and woman, of all the thirty millions of our population. We have had adventure, and plunder, and murder sufficient on our distant frontiers, to make the heart sick; and, to cause every well meaning citizen to sigh for a nation's repose. It is high time, that the spirit of content should find a lodgment in the breasts of our American people. Our cup is running over; we have an abundance, and to spare; and woe to our homes, and our little ones should this inordinate thirst for the extension of domain, presently culminate in foul invasion and bloody conquest!

IV *Making haste to be rich* I may mention as an evident iniquity of the times—a *characteristic sin* of the American people. In avoiding the extremes, to which many of the nations of Europe have been subject, we have been in danger constantly, of degenerating into other grievous errors. In this country, we have no feudal system, nor lordly titles or inheritance; but, we have *a grand high road to wealth*, and any man, however humble his birth, or unfavourable his social surroundings, if he have sufficient economy, tact, perseverance and foresight, may, presently, emerge from his lowly condition, and take a high and honorable position among our merchant princes. Indeed, the opportunities for amassing wealth are so ample, that in ordinary times, it requires no special talent, unless it may be a little present self-denial, and patient waiting, to lay up and secure a handsome fortune. I may add, that the opportunities for speculation and fraud, are so constantly at hand, and the prospect of a speedy success so ready and inviting, that hundreds are allured, as by some resistless phantom; and plunge, recklessly, into the perpetration of their ill-suggested and unhallowed schemes. *Money* originates and sustains the *aristocracy* of America. Here, every man has some day-dream of riches, and abounding wealth. Every man hopes, before he dies, to be a *Nabob*. Some intend in one way, and some in another, to secure the grand result. A majority, perhaps, start with upright intentions; but chafing and rubbing, as they necessarily must,

almost every day of their lives, against sharpers and reckless self-seekers, many contract the wicked mania ; and becoming, at length, impatient of the issue, forget their honest beginnings, and venture the result upon any scale of embezzlement or defalcation, that may be most congenial to their improved ideas of luxury and taste.

In the early days of our republic, this greediness of lucre was not so strongly developed. Our fathers were far more circumscribed as to their desires and aims. A good, plain house, with substantial furniture, and enough to eat, and to wear, satisfied their most ambitious aims. Comfort, and hospitable accommodations for one's immediate family, and a pleasant circle of tried friends, was the acme of life. Not so now! Show, and parade, and effect are the ends that impel the old and the young, to turn every stone, in the eager search for dollars. Calico dresses, spinning wheels and ruddy cheeks are, all, out of fashion. Martha Washington would be too plain a woman for these days of vanity. Rustling silks, hot rooms, sickly faces—effeminacy, luxury, idleness—these are the habits and characteristics of this golden age of American progress.

It is true, my brethren, that we are far in the advance of our predecessors in the general improvement of the country. Our railroads, telegraphs, steamboats, and a hundred other things in science, and art, all indicate a healthy and desirable advancement ; but, with these, comes an increased love of gold ; and, as the facilities for intercourse have been increased, a new acquaintance has been opened up, in every family, with luxurious modes of living ; taste has been improved ; refinements (so called) have become more generally diffused ; and, to sustain and practice these, money, money, money in abundance, must be secured.

In this country, *Money* can buy anything. It can secure power and position ; and, if it cannot give a man a moral character, it can hide a multitude of sins. It makes one a gentleman ; gives him official promotion ; palsies the tongue of scandal ; stops the course of justice ; and, saves the foulest rogue from the penitentiary or the gallows. Hence the temptation—and hence the earnest rush of the *whole* people, in the strife for wealth. Men have always loved money ; and the love of money has always been the chief source of evil in the world ; but, the American people seem to have a more inordinate thirst, *as a people*, for gold and treasure, than any other people on the face of the globe. It is a national sin : and as such, it must meet the retribution of Heaven.

V *Sectional jealousy* may be put down as among the most heinous of our national sins. It is this iniquity, which of all others, is more

generally disturbing the peace of our land ; and at the present, most evidently, invoking the judgments of Heaven.

How different the prevailing feelings of this day, from the warm, sincere, and united hearts of the noble patriots who laid the foundations of our government. With them, the idea of a community of interests was the absorbing principle. In the earlier days of the republic, every public movement had reference to the general good ; and no mean monopolist dared suggest a thought advantageous to his own state or neighborhood, to the injury of other sections, lest confidence should be impaired, and the bond of union destroyed. Then the people knew no North, no South, no East, no West. The institutions of every part of the land were sacredly respected. The Southern planter could visit his friends at the North, taking his servants with him ; remain as long as business or pleasure required, and return, at length, to the bosom of his family, rejoicing in the remembrance of his warm greeting in Philadelphia, New York, or Boston. The Massachusetts merchant, or factor could come down to our sunny South ; attend to his business in Richmond, Charleston, or New Orleans ; mingle in our festive scenes ; take part in our church ordinances ; sit with us at our hospitable tables ; and, the very children, and servants would mourn for his departure. Then a Yankee school master could be found in every village ; and a roving pedlar, from "down East," threaded every country horse-path. At that time, these persons were not considered our enemies. On the contrary, they were every where greeted with pleasure. A teacher from New England was respected as a perfect gentleman ; and our wealthiest citizens felt it no disgrace to introduce these well bred, and well educated, though generally poor young men, into their old Cavalier families ; and presently, to give to them in marriage, the fairest of their graceful and accomplished daughters. Even the shrewd, jogging pedlar, from "the land of wooden nutmegs," was not respected the less, because he knew how to make a bargain ; but was often anxiously looked for, by many a rural housewife, who had carefully laid by her "chores and fixings," for the day of his coming.

But how changed the scene ! All this fair prospect is at an end ! Miserable jealousies have arisen. The North is now arrayed against the South, and the South against the North. The bonds of affection are all broken. The institutions of the South have been invaded ; incendiary pamphlets and papers have crowded our mails, and have been scattered throughout all our once peaceful neighborhoods. Emissaries from the

fanatical associations of New England have been sent, secretly, and with the most diabolical purposes, into our factories, our shops, and our kitchens. Our wives and children have been affrighted; our servants have been made unhappy and suspicious; and our very lives have been endangered.

These intrusive and reckless movements, on the part of those with whom we once associated, without suspicion, have awakened the spirit of opposition, of hatred—*disgust*. Our young men have become frenzied; and, many of our most calm and considerate citizens have been aroused from their dispassionate quiet—thrown aside their conservative characters; and, joined hand in hand with those who have raved the wildest. It is not safe now, to go from one State to another. Every man is suspected who comes from a latitude north of any other. He may be himself from a slave State, a slave owner, and accustomed to African labor, all his life; but, “he is a foreigner.” People don’t know who he is. They watch him. He is overheard to say something, that *looks like* interference. It was not very definite, to be sure. He had no business, however, to say it. Perhaps, he would say more, if he were not afraid. At all events, he don’t belong among us; it is enough; his head is shaved; a coat of feathers is inflicted; and off he is sent by the next cars, amidst the sneers, and excitements of an infuriated mob.

Now, my brethren, we have had enough, it is true, to disturb our most christian equanimity. We have been attacked, and repudiated, and ill spoken of. Our homes have been invaded; and attempts have been made even upon the lives of our citizens. It is right, that we should be ready for the worst, and, that we should take care of ourselves. But, let us not be *too* fast! Shall we augment *our own* guilt, simply because *others* choose to forget their obligations to God and their neighbor? Let it be admitted, that the people of the North have dealt ungenerously with us, in all these matters.—What then?—Will not God hold them accountable? But, *we*, too, have sinned. We have condemned the mass, for the sins of the *few*—or, if you please, for the sins of the many. We have not done justice to the thousands of good men, who have had a cordial sympathy for us, in our troubles; and, who would help us in our difficulties, if they could. We have forgotten the men, who as earnestly detest the abolition spirit as we do, and the thousands who voted with us in the last electoral contest. If we have thought of the conservative men of the North, at all, we have given them no credit for sincerity. God does not excuse injustice, however great our provocations. Our blessed master

has given us an example of patience, and forbearance. He does not say, that we may not defend ourselves in the hour of aggression: but, he also commands, "Give to all men that which is just and equal." He says to every one of us, "Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God." Put up then, every man his sword, and let us love as brethren!

VI. A crying sin of the American people, is their *inordinate devotion to politics—especially to partisan politics*. This evil is incident to the nature of our government. We are a free people, and every man has a right to say who shall rule the nation. Possessed of so precious a franchise, no good citizen wishes to relinquish it. It is the duty, no doubt, of every sane adult, to exercise his judgment in this matter; and to contribute his mite towards the wise and peaceable administration of the body-politic. But, this does not justify the construction of hostile parties, or a blind and reckless suffrage. Every voter is bound by the principles of an honest patriotism, and in view of his accountability to God, to give his voice, and his influence, in favour of such measures as he, to the best of his judgment, shall conceive to be for the welfare of his country. No man has a right to allow selfish considerations to bias his feelings, or to force his vote in aid of a faction.

Christian men, especially, have an obligation here, which they cannot evade. It is the duty of the disciples of Jesus Christ, to go to the ballot box, from their knees; and under no circumstances, to give countenance to partisan tricks, or to help, in any way, the ambitious, self-seeking of the remorseless demagogue. I doubt, whether it is the duty of any Christian, under the peculiar polity of the American franchise, to withhold his vote—unless, the circumstances of his position be *special*, and likely to cause some local injury to the cause of the Redeemer. The unmanly silence, of some prominent members of the Church of Christ, has, virtually, repudiated the idea of principle, in our representative system; and, their coldness, or indifference has contributed, not a little, to crowd our legislative halls, with unworthy officials, who have bought their way to power, by rum, lucre, or blandishments.

How can we expect the country to be well ruled, and justice to be administered, with an even hand, when good men are afraid to go to the polls; when rowdies, and blacklegs are prominent in primary meetings; and, when the question is not, who is the most honest man—but, who is available?—It may be regarded as a Utopian fancy, to hope for a better state of things, in this ante-millennial age. Not so, however! There

are virtuous, and honest men enough in the land, (with God's blessing) to save it—and, to preserve its integrity, through successive years. The *Church* should arise in its strength; and, supported by pure minded and law abiding citizens, who have, not yet, enrolled themselves among the people of God—who, though not professors of religion, are, nevertheless, men of principle—these good, and true men, (in the church, and out of it) should fearlessly, conscientiously, set their faces, like a flint, against intrigue, bribery, fraud, and all manner of political corruption. They should cultivate the spirit of patriotism; have no private interest to preserve; watch the *general* weal; frown upon every demagogic aim; and, undauntedly, and faithfully, stand up for principle, at every gathering of the people, and, at every political election.

It is not to be expected, that all men should see alike. Honest men may honestly differ in opinion in regard to the most momentous interests. But, there is no justification, in this fact, for the spirit of crimination, that so extensively prevails in the country. Let well meaning men pursue all honorable, and virtuous means, to secure the results, which they deem to be of most importance to the welfare of the Confederacy; but, let them cease to *invent* unnecessary issues; let them not regard it as indispensable, and wise, to *create* opposing interests; let them cease to assail, with vehemence, and vituperation, the conscientious scruples of those, who occupying a different—and, it may be, a less eligible standpoint—see not, as they do. Let them admit, that there are men of enlarged, and comprehensive views, whose notions of right, are based upon as candid an investigation as their own; and, that there are as noble instances of disinterested judgment at the North, as at the South.

“Every petty class—dissention,
Heal it up as quick as thought;
Every paltry place—pretension,
Crush it, as a thing of naught.

Fling away, absurd ambition,
People, leave that toy to kings;
Envy, jealousy, suspicion,
Be above such grovelling things.”

VII. I wish to add just one more head—under which, I may briefly advert to a *few prominent sins, developed in high places*; and which do much to tarnish the lustre of the nation's morality.

The honoured, and honourable men, who make our laws, at Washington, will compare favourably, with any Congress on earth. Many noble spirits have occupied those halls: and, upon the whole, as pure

morality has marked the Representatives of the American people, as can be found in any human government. But, we are not, by any means, what we ought to be, in the character of our public servants. To the shame of their constituents, many bad men come into power. Often, indeed, the most irregular, and dissolute sycophants are shouted into office by clamorous, and overwhelming majorities. These men carry their habits with them, to the seat of government; and, it is not uncommon, to find a member of congress, *who refuses to pay his debts*: and, who takes advantage—to the detriment of his poor creditor—of the protection his office affords.

Gambling is a vice well known at Washington. Billiard rooms, and *faro* tables are scattered hither and thither, all over the city; and, many a representative of the people—sitting up all night, strolls along to the business of the nation, after his irregular sleep, and a mid-day breakfast.

Liquor is boldly meted out to “Buncomb Speakers,” within the walls of the Capitol; and, under the very statues of Liberty, and of Wisdom, the Conservators of a nation’s glory bind themselves, in Demon’s chains, and madly seek a drunkard’s grave!

Alas, too, for the example given by our Congressional Fathers, as to *the observance of the christian Sabbath!* To say nothing of individual cases of desecration, we have a melancholy history of legislative encroachment, on the morning hours of that holy time, which no man, nor body of men, may appropriate to themselves. How many bills have been hurried through Congress during these fragments of God’s day, I know not; but, the record is on high—and the Nation is accountable!

Add to all this, *the disgraceful broils, and miserable fisti-cuffs*, which have been enacted upon the floor of the National Capitol, from the famous battle between Griswold, and Lyon, in 1796, down to the Brooks and Sumner affair, in 1857, and the Lovejoy raid, of the last session; and, we shall have a painful remembrance of “how the mighty have fallen,” and of our shame in the sight of God, and the world!

This would be a proper place, to speak of the sanction given by the general government, to the *Sunday mails*; and, the abominations resulting therefrom, through the legalized steamboat, and railroad carrying. I might, also, speak of the *corrupt legislation, log-rolling, bribery*, and other enormities, that disgrace us, in the eyes of christendom, and condemn us, in the sight of God; but, the heart sickens in the contemplation of these things, and our very soul recoils in grief. Enough has been said, to impress us, fearfully, with a sense of the extreme folly, and sin of a so

called christian people. Great, indeed, is the evil which we have committed—for all of which we deserve, and are now suffering the chastisement of Jehovah's rod! What a spectacle do we present to the world! *Our skirts are discovered—our heels are made bare. Alas, for our nakedness, and our poverty! This is our lot, the portion of our measure from the LORD: because we have forgotten Him, and trusted in falsehood!!* *

A P P L I C A T I O N

In closing these remarks, I have only to suggest, my brethren, that we truly HUMBLE ourselves, before God this day, on account of our many, and aggravated sins. We are guilty—verily guilty!—and we richly deserve the displeasure of Heaven! In our abasement, it becomes us sensibly to realize our *individual* connection, with these sins of the Nation. We have nothing to do, in this act of humiliation, with the shortcomings, or transgressions of others. We are not called, at the present, to make a pharasaical confession of sins, in which we have had no part. We are not here, by the proclamation of the President, to criminate the North, or the South: and under some vague, and general notion of a nation's guilt, to make our formal, and unfelt acknowledgments, in the House of God. Let there be earnest heart-searchings, my brethren, at this solemn crisis; and, let us in the true spirit of fasting, and self-abasement, implore the forgiveness of Jehovah, for all our *individual* and *personal* participation, not only in the enormities, which have been reviewed in this discourse; but, in all else, that we know to be the sins of the PEOPLE. There is not a man of us, perchance, who is without part, and share is this guilt. God grant, that whilst we jointly, and in unison, lift our hearts to the throne of Heavenly grace—we may have a just sense of our separate depravity: and, that each of us may stand alone before God, in our conscientious, and most penitent confessions!

As to what is best to be done, just now, for the safety of the country, I have nothing to say as a *politician*. As a *christian minister*, and with the confident belief that “God reigns,” it becomes me, to exhort every well meaning man, to retain his integrity; and, to warn citizens of every class, to beware of an evil conscience. See to it, my brethren, and fellow-citizens, that ye honestly give to ALL, that which is *just*, and *equal*: and then,—and not till then,—when the sins of the past have been ser-

* Read Jeremiah, XIII chapter throughout.

rowed for, with an honest grief; and, when the great body of the American people manifest a disposition to do that which is RIGHT, in the sight of God, and man—only *then*, shall we be “delivered out of all our distresses.” The ALMIGHTY JEHOVAH—He is our FRIEND: and, to Him we must look! To Him *do* we come!

“O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou *it* [that which is right, and best] for thy name’s sake: for our back-slidings are many; we have sinned against thee.

O, the Hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in the time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a way-faring man, *that* turneth aside, to tarry for a night?

Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man *that* cannot save! Yet, thou O LORD *art* in the midst of us; and, we are called by thy name: LEAVE US NOT!” *

* Jeremiah, XIV., 7. 8. 9.

